

# Crossing Cultures

## Considering Ethnotheory in Teacher Thinking and Practices

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### Introduction

Our society is becoming more and more culturally diverse. Schools are no exception. This poses a unique set of challenges for establishing meaningful home-school relations. Given the fact that the home and the school may represent two different cultures, families and schools may not share the same vision with regard to how children should be educated and who is primarily responsible for their education. Open and honest communication between teachers and parents can help establish common understandings and expectations about facilitating learning and development of children (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987). Establishing effective communication is even more critical when parents and schools come from different cultures.

In our state, as well as many other states across the country, while the student population is becoming increasingly diverse, the teaching profession remains largely European-American women. Consequently, this is a state where many teachers are teaching "other people's children," to quote Lisa Delpit's words (1995). Teachers may have difficulties communicating effectively with parents from cultures different from their own, and may not perceive the importance of culturally sensitive teaching.

Therefore, the long-term goal of this research project was to implement and evaluate the impact of professional development programs designed to develop teachers' skills for effective cross-cultural communication with parents.

### Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The broad foundation for the study is Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework: that children are raised in an interlocking set of systems and that open communication between the mesolinks is imperative if children are to grow and learn (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). Based on this framework, families and schools were conceptualized as components of the microsystem, and the relationship between the family and school as comprising the mesosystem. Culture is seen as part of the macrosystem, which permeates through the mesosystem to influence the child.

Additionally, the model of "developmental niche" developed by Super and Harkness (1997) is utilized to understand the framework of the current study. This model conceptualizes development of children in a cultural context. Caretakers' (specifically parental) theories about child-rearing, called ethnotheories, are seen as the pathways through which development is fostered. Imbedded in each cultural background are ethnotheories about the best way to raise and educate children. For the present study, the focus is on the similarities and differences between the ethnotheories of parents and teachers.

Ethnotheories are derived from cultural communities (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). When parents and teachers come from different cultural communities, it is likely that these ethnotheories will differ. In order to understand the personal ethnotheories of parents and teachers and the resulting impact they have on how parents and teachers interact we need to define cultural communities. Therefore, for this study, we define cultural communities as being influenced by multiple variables including historical and social contexts (Greenfield, 1994), geographic location, gender, age, and generation along with ethnicity and race (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003).

In our research, we specifically looked at SES and immigrant families as two main aspects of cultural communities.

Scholars in the field of home-school relations stress the importance of home-school communication for promoting academic success (Ames, 1993; Bempechat, 1992; Dodd & Konzal, 2002; Epstein, 2001; Graham-Clay, 2005; Heiling, 1996) and identify the barriers in communication, especially when it concerns schools and families having different cultural viewpoints (Bermudez & Marquez, 1996; Columbo, 2004; Dennessen, Bakker, & Gierveld, 2007; Dodd & Konzal, 1999, 2002; Epstein & Becker, 1982; Graham-Clay, 2005; Hughes & MacNaughton, 2000; Sy, 2006; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003). Understanding the frameworks within which families function (Casper, 2003), such as culture (Weisner, 1998; Souto-Manning, & Scwick, 2006; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003), economic factors (Greenfield, 1994; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001), socioeconomic class (Lareau, 2002; Smith, 2006), and child-rearing/socialization practices (Bempechat, 1992), becomes vital to promote effective communication with and involvement of families.

Therefore, it becomes the school's responsibility to help build bridges between the cultures of the children, their families, and other communities by respecting their diversity (Wright & Stegelin, 2003). Often lack of understanding of the families' cultural pathways/ethnotheories and lack of knowledge about how to build these bridges (e.g., see Gonzalez-Mena, 2000) creates obstacles in the communication between teachers and families. Current literature in the field has underscored the need for culturally responsive teaching (Casper, 2003; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1991; Marion, 1980; Voltz, 1994) and home-school relations (Columbo, 2004; Dennessen, Bakker, & Gierveld, 2007; Eberly, Joshi, & Konzal, 2007; Joshi, Eberly, & Konzal, 2005; Sy, 2006; Souto-Manning,

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& Swick, 2006; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003).

## Purpose

The ultimate goal of our multiphase research project was to impact teachers' knowledge and dispositions in a manner that would lead to more culturally responsive teacher-parent interactions. This was envisioned in terms of developing a professional development program for teachers and professional staff. The development of this program evolved over three phases of research. In the first phase of our study, through the means of a survey, we explored the teachers' knowledge and beliefs about how culture influences learning and their current practices of interacting with parents.

To further probe the teachers' thinking and practices, focus groups were conducted during the second phase. These focus groups generated comprehensive information that provided a strong foundation for designing a professional development program for teachers and professional staff to enable them to work effectively with parents from cultures different from their own during the third phase.

This article critically evaluates the effectiveness of all three phases of our research in terms of its methodology and findings. Research indicates that dispositions can be challenging to change (Goodlad, 1990; Kegan, 1989, 1995), but some success has been found through coursework activities, clinical experiences, modeling by professors and mentors, discussion forums, and the use of teaching cases (Campbell, 1997; Luckowski, 1997; Shulman, 1992; Strike, 1993; Strike & Soltis, 1985; Wakefield, 1993; Wasserman, 1993; Yost, 1997).

In the following pages, we describe each phase of the research in terms of its objectives, methods, and findings. The article concludes with our discussion of the effectiveness of our professional development in terms of examining and extending teachers' understanding, attitudes, and dispositions towards working with families in ways that are culturally responsive.

## Phase 1

The goal of the first phase of our research project was to examine educators' beliefs and understandings and practices with regard to the following:

- ◆ parent involvement;
- ◆ culture and its relation to childrearing;

◆ culture and its relation to children's education; and

- ◆ the connections that they make between students' cultural backgrounds when planning instruction.

Surveys were collected from practicing teachers, specialists, and administrators in public and private schools serving children from preschool to 5th grade. The final sample consisted of 40 respondents with the majority being female (92%) and PK-3 teachers (82%). In terms of ethnicity/racial backgrounds, only 90% self-identified. Of that 90%, 83% were Euro-American, 11% African American, and 3% were Latino/Hispanic and Middle Eastern. In terms of the demographic composition of the schools where these educators worked, many had approximately half Euro-American with the rest being African American, Latino/Hispanic, or Asian American.

The survey took the form of a questionnaire, which was comprised of two main sections: the first focused upon parent involvement and the second focused upon knowledge about culture and its influence on students. Three types of questions were utilized in the survey: open-ended, likert-type, and ranking questions. The parent involvement section consisted of questions seeking the teachers' conceptualization of parent involvement and identifying the means and challenges of involving parents. The second section involved definition of culture and specifically focused on six elements of culture: communication patterns, social values, ways of learning, child rearing, outward displays, and religious practices. For example, a question asked was: "According to you, what are the most important things that you need to know to understand culture? From the complete list, please rank from 1-5, with 1 being most important." Once again, a list was provided. Another example of a question was: "Do you think it is important to understand the different cultures of the families of the children in your classrooms? Why or why not?" (See Appendix for complete list of questions.)

The findings highlighted the discrepancies between the teachers' beliefs and practices. With regard to parent involvement and home school relations, though teachers recognized the supportive role parents played for the education of their children, they sought a more uni-directional teacher parent relationship, which did not facilitate two-way interchange of knowledge about the children.

With respect to culture, teachers ac-

knowledgeed that overt aspects of culture (food, art, dress, and cultural celebrations) were least important in understanding the role of culture in education. Ironically their response also indicated that they did not have much awareness about other aspects of culture (child rearing, communication patterns, social values, etc.) beyond these overt ones. Interestingly the teachers were unaware of the discrepancy between their beliefs and their practices both in terms of parent involvement and culture. Because of these and other discrepancies, focus groups were formed to understand, clarify, and probe the issues that arose, which was the goal of Phase 2 of our research (See Joshi, Eberly, & Konzal, 2005).

## Phase 2

In order to contextualize the participants' responses regarding knowledge and practices, a focus group protocol was developed and implemented. Participants for the focus groups comprise a "relatively homogenous" (Patton, 1990, p.335) population and are from "theoretically chosen subgroups from the total population" who can "provide the most meaningful information" (Morgan, 1998, p.45). Our focus groups met these criteria.

Two separate focus groups were conducted. One focus group, with a total of 10 participants, consisted of teachers and professional staff from a local elementary school. All but one were European American. The second group consisted of 11 participants, nine practicing preschool teachers and one teacher-candidate, who were enrolled in a graduate class at a local college. This group was more diverse and included seven European Americans, two African Americans, one Hispanic/Latino, and one West Indian.

Ten lead questions were developed, which revolved around four main themes: ways in which family values and beliefs impact learning; ways of communicating with and involving parents from diverse cultures; specific questions participants would like to ask parents about their cultural practices; and specific needs for professional development in working with parents from diverse cultures. Additional themes that emerged during the discussions were also probed. Examples of the kinds of questions asked in the focus group were: "Based on our survey, most people identified and defined cultured as a set of values and beliefs. Would you agree? If yes, can you elaborate in terms of what that means? What are the ways that you cur-



rently use to communicate with parents? And what do you usually communicate to them about?"

Findings from the focus groups highlighted some interesting insights. The majority of the participants acknowledged the importance of accepting and understanding parents' beliefs and practices about child rearing, but yet negatively judged the specific behaviors and practices. They also found it especially difficult to tease out differences between class and race. Overall, based on their discussions in the focus groups, it was apparent that the participants became more self aware about their beliefs and biases (see Eberly, Joshi, & Konzal, 2007, for details).

The results of this phase highlighted the need for helping teachers re-think their understanding of the impact of expectations and definitions of parental involvement, and for designing training to help teachers move towards identifying meaningful ways of facilitating home-school relations. Therefore, this was the foundation for our final phase of the research, Phase 3 (see Eberly, Joshi, & Konzal, 2007).

### Phase 3

Based on the data gathered in the previous stages, a series of professional development sessions were created to promote culturally responsive strategies for teachers working with students and parents from cultural communities different from their own. Our goal was to help participants understand, acknowledge, respect, and work with the ethnotheories of parents from diverse cultures, and to align their attitudes and behaviors with their knowledge about families from diverse cultures.

Three sessions were designed and implemented over a span of three months. The first session focused on self-awareness and incorporated a variety of self-reflection strategies and simulation exercises in an effort to uncover personal beliefs and biases. After the first session, participants were asked to volunteer to maintain a journal of their thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding culturally responsive practices. These were collected at the end of the last session.

The second session included a panel of parents from diverse cultures sharing information about their cultural and educational experiences both in their home countries and in the U.S., followed by small group discussions with the panelists. An overall debriefing about the participants' insights into the different cultures, ways

of child rearing, and education beliefs concluded the session.

The third session focused on skills and strategies that the teachers could implement in their own schools for working with families. This was done by means of a group reading of a Readers Theatre script, a script developed based on the themes that emerged from Phase 2, followed by a group analysis of a case that highlighted how a specific cultural practice (i.e., birthday celebrations) plays out in a culturally diverse classroom (see Rand, 2000).

Taken together, these three sessions allowed for extended and difficult discussions about how to confront personal biases about different ethnotheories concerning child-rearing. A total of 20 teachers (two males, 18 females) participated. Of those, ten attended all three workshops. All were working in local public schools. Some were specialists; however, the majority were classroom teachers. With respect to ethnicity, 17 were Caucasian, and one each from Asian Indian, African American, and Hispanic/Latino backgrounds.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the professional development program, each participant responded to a case individually. The case was "Making a Decision about College: Should I Stay or Should I Go?" (Dell, 2003) (The case was used with permission from the FINE Network). The purpose was to investigate how participants translated their knowledge about different cultural orientations gained through the professional development program in a simulated education scenario.

The case described a student's dilemma regarding making a decision to continue her education. Priorities of family responsibility over individual advancement derived from a cultural lens that values interdependence over independence as a goal of child rearing were the key issues involved in this dilemma. (Greenfield, 1994; Trumbull, et al, 2001; Trumbull, et al 2003).

Because of low attendance in the third session, only ten participants responded to this case. Analyses of the responses revealed three qualitatively different categories with regard to how the participants translated the knowledge into practice in relation to the case study. The first category of responses, involving four respondents, either ignored or denied the importance of students' cultural community's ethnotheories about childrearing. For example, one participant stated that the advice she would give to the student (Marisela) in the dilemma of the case study was:

I would let Marisela tell me all about her feelings and help her realize that its okay for her to pursue her own hopes and dreams. I would remind her how much she (Marisela) has helped her family but let her know that she now should do what is best for her.

The second category of responses, involving three respondents, recognized the influence of culture at a very minimal or superficial level. An example of a response for this category was when one participant stated:

I would tell Marisela that she should make a list of the pros and cons of each choice and think carefully about each one. She should also talk with her family about them. But ultimately, it is her life and her decision to make based on her own priorities and values.

The last set of responses, again involving three respondents, recognized the importance of the influence of culture and was able to identify the underlying principles for culturally responsive teaching. For example, one participant stated:

I would encourage Marisela to make that decision with her mother and let her mother know her worries. Maybe a compromise of going to school closer to home rather than across the country would work. I would emphasize the need to talk to her aunt and mother and make the decision with her family involved.

In other words, the majority of the participants were not able to apply their new knowledge about cultural differences in any meaningful way. They relied on their own ethnotheories to inform their responses to the case.

As mentioned earlier, in the first session volunteers were sought to maintain a journal of their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in relation to the issues surrounding culturally responsive practice. These were collected at the last session of the professional development program. While only three participants submitted journals, emerging patterns within these were interesting and worthy of note. Analyses of their entries revealed that the three participants were at different positions on the continuum of culturally responsive practice. Two of the three participants seemed to have begun the process of self-reflection and of becoming aware of issues that families from diverse cultures face in day-to-day school life.

Some of the critical themes that emerged in one of these two participants' journals included the importance

of knowing your students and researching their backgrounds and of bridging communication differences by labeling items in languages other than English and by attempting to learn phrases in the other languages.

I checked with the lead teacher and with her approval labeled bathroom, shelves, door, computer and other items with Spanish words. English labels were already on the items.

However, she appears to lack confidence in her ideas, so that when she faced opposition/resistance in making these changes, she seemed to retreat and was unable to make change happen. Two days after the entry quoted above, her entire journal entry was:

I checked with lead teacher to see if she would mind if French labels went up with the English/Spanish labels; unfortunately she felt they would confuse the other children. My request was denied.

A few days later, she reports:

Nothing new added to the mix. I continue to attempt speaking multiple languages with the children. The children smile and seem to appreciate my efforts.

While she demonstrates concrete ideas for being more culturally responsive in her practices, she lacks a deeper understanding of the broader context of culture.

Some of the themes that emerged in the second participant's journal included self-awareness about personal biases and preferences and the importance of establishing communication and dialogue with families from other cultures in order to understand their perspective. She discussed the importance of sharing this knowledge and insights with other colleagues, for example, through a parent panel and opening her classroom to be more inclusive of people from other cultures:

I feel like there is so much I can do and change about my students my interactions with parents. I want more parents to be involved in my classroom and what a great way to do it by having students ask their parents to come in to discuss something from their culture.

In her next entry, she writes:

I recently attended a workshop on continuing to integrate technology in the classroom. During the speech, the keynote discussed having pen-pals with students all over the world. With this in mind, what about using this as a way to have students become more culturally aware?

Like the previous participant, she expresses concrete ideas for increasing cultural sensitivity and awareness in her classroom, but she seems to see her role as simply adding to the existing curriculum within her school.

The other participant, however, reflected upon culture not only within the school context, but also within the wider community within which she lived. Her journal entry showed that she not only had developed a keen sense of self-awareness, but took it a step farther to become an advocate. She became increasingly aware of lack of cultural sensitivity not only within the school setting but also within the broader society. She adopted a unique way of advocating for children and their families by making a special effort to acknowledge the strengths and achievements of the children in the face of apparent prejudice from others. Her journal stated:

Had to leave the faculty room today because of remarks from K. about Paulina and other ESL kids. She is so negative and sarcastic about these kids, as if they were a total annoyance to her as a prank or something. I love these kids so much and think they are doing beautifully. She runs them down and their parents.... I will continue to leave the lunch room whenever she does this. Maybe she will get the hint. In the meantime, I make it a point to tell other teachers how well the ESL kids from their classes are doing.

In her next entry, she writes:

It is clear that this school could use some kind of culture awareness program. The same teachers are making the same prejudicial remarks over and over.... I want to scream. Instead, I usually counter with some positive remark or endearing anecdote! This is just a microcosm of the problems in the world. The people who feel threatened try to place themselves on top by pushing everything else down. Somehow I know and accept this when it comes from politicians, ignorant Americans, or people with limited worldly experience, but teachers?!

Overall, the three participants seem to have begun the process of shifting their thinking towards more culturally responsive practice. Upon comparing the journal entries of these three participants with their case study responses about how their thinking or disposition about culturally responsive practices (inferred from the journal entries) differed or mirrored their knowledge of the same (inferred from their case study responses), interesting patterns

emerged. Analyses revealed that in all three cases, their thinking/dispositions were more advanced than their ability to apply their knowledge into practice.

## Discussion

The purpose of this research was to design, pilot, and evaluate a professional development program with the objective of changing the knowledge, thinking, and practice of teachers related to how cultural communities' ethnotheories influence practice. Moving beyond one's own ethnotheories to understand the world through others' eyes, to decenter, requires a high level of abstract thinking and a willingness to struggle with the discrepancies between what one was raised believing and what others believe.

Clearly the results of our pilot professional development program highlight the difficulty of helping teachers reach this level of thinking and of translating it into practice. The participants were in beginning stages of reflecting on these differences and of confronting their biases. The findings suggest that the program helped some teachers continue on the journey of self-awareness regarding cultural differences and sensitivities.

However, when provided with a simulated opportunity to translate their knowledge into practice by means of a case study, their practice seemed to lag behind their thinking processes. Findings from other research resonate the disparities between teachers' beliefs and practices. For example, Vartuli (1999) reported significant disparity between early childhood teacher beliefs and observed practices regarding developmentally appropriate teaching. The research highlighted the struggles involved in changing knowledge and beliefs and its translation into practice.

Because of these above-mentioned challenges, it was necessary to analyze critically the strategies and methods that were utilized in the professional development program that either helped or hindered the transition of the teachers' thinking into their simulated practice. To summarize, self-awareness and self-reflection exercises and simulations, expert panel narratives, case analyses, and readers' theater were the main strategies and methods used for implementing the professional development program.

The content of the three sessions was based on data gathered in earlier phases, specifically teacher questionnaires related to their parent involvement strategies and



culturally responsive home-school relations in Phase 1, and themes emerging from focus group data in Phase 2. This was the main strength of the professional development program, as it was data-driven. For example, the first session focused primarily on self-awareness and reflection because data from Phases 1 and 2 indicated discrepancies between the teachers' beliefs and practices.

The second session focused on sharing of personal narratives of parents from diverse cultural backgrounds who were educated in their home countries. This was important because results from the surveys indicated that teachers had limited knowledge about cultural practices beyond outward displays such as food, music, celebration, etc., and therefore it was necessary to give additional information to foster a deeper understanding of how cultural practices could impact home-school relationships.

In the third session, the main focus was on application to enhance participants' practice with culturally responsive home-school relations. The use of the readers' theater and case analysis was chosen to bridge theory and practice for the participants. The final exercise in this last session was to have the participants respond individually in writing to a case in order to ascertain their ability to apply these concepts in a school-based scenario.

While the professional development program had some positive aspects, there were shortcomings that limited its potential effectiveness. Some of the shortcomings related to the structure of the professional development program. First and foremost, based on the participants' feedback, the sessions, while they were each 2.5 hours long, were still perceived too short to facilitate in-depth discussion and reflection at the highest level. Additionally, the scheduling of the sessions being one month apart may have negatively impacted the continuity of the process.

Initially a one-month gap between sessions was chosen because it was thought that participants would need time to reflect and internalize the concepts. However, on hindsight, this may have been detrimental rather than beneficial for the participants. This probably also influenced the attrition rate of the participants attending the third session. This last session also fell at the latter part of the school year, which may have impacted the need for the third session for professional development hours (in our state, teachers must earn professional development hours each year).

In addition to shortcomings related to the structure of the professional development program, there are areas where the content could have been strengthened to help smooth the transition between knowledge, beliefs, and practices. For instance, in the case study used for this program, participants first had to understand that some cultures view the goal of child rearing to be one of interdependence and then to accept that as an equally valid goal to one of independence.

Kegan (1989, 1995), a scholar interested in examining adult development and thinking, would consider this type of thinking world-centric and suggest that for even many adults it is very difficult to attain this level of thinking. Other research conducted in the context of teaching highlights the factors that might influence the transition from knowledge and beliefs into practices.

Ernest (1988) in his discussion of the role of beliefs on teaching of mathematics, talked about three factors that influenced teaching practices: first, the role of social context in terms of the "constraints and opportunities" it provided; second, the "higher level of thought" of the teacher which helped him/her "to reflect on the gap between beliefs and practices"; and third, the teacher beliefs that ultimately influenced the changes made in the teaching of mathematics (Ernest, 1988, p. 11).

In another study, Waters-Adams (2006) focused on looking at teachers' beliefs and practices about science teaching. Waters-Adams found that in order for effective practice to take place, it was necessary that the new knowledge resonate with the teachers' beliefs, and thus engaging in self-reflection would be a critical element in teacher preparation program. Both of the aforementioned studies emphasize the inter-connectedness between knowledge, beliefs, and practices and the role of self-reflection in making the transition into practice.

In other words, in order to achieve the higher level of thinking that Kegan refers to, more strategies that have the participants confront their biases and misperceptions could have been incorporated. For example, in session two the personal narratives of the parent panelists were an eye-opener for participants as knowledge moved from abstraction to reality. In this session, participants' feedback reiterated the effect that parents' narratives had on them. Once again, both participants and researchers felt that additional time devoted to this method could have been

beneficial. Additionally, more case analyses and perhaps role plays could have been incorporated to enable the participants to understand and value multiple perspectives, especially related to ethnotheories of child rearing and education.

## Conclusion

Upon critically reviewing the design and delivery of our professional development program to help teachers and professional staff establish effective culturally responsive home-school relationships, it is evident that transition from knowledge into practice is difficult and requires time. In effect, in planning the program, more time needs to be spent helping participants confront and reflect on the new knowledge they have gained about cultural ethnotheories and how it challenges their own beliefs and prejudices.

We had placed participants in a state of disequilibrium and needed to provide them with opportunities to build new schemas about different child-rearing and education practice. These findings point to the need for more sessions spent increasing the depth of the new knowledge before leading the participants to confront and challenge their own cultural ethnotheories.

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## Appendix

## Working with Parents from Diverse Cultures Survey

## Section I

1a. How would you define parent involvement?

1b. How are parents currently involved in your classroom?

2a. What according to you are the most important ways that parents should be involved in their children's education? From the *complete* list, please choose the *five most important* and rank them from 1-5, with 1 *being most important*. You may also add any other components.

- \_\_\_ Teach children about their family's values and beliefs
- \_\_\_ Provide extracurricular experiences in the home and community
- \_\_\_ Help children with homework
- \_\_\_ Provide a quiet place and a routine for homework
- \_\_\_ Attend Parent meetings/ conferences
- \_\_\_ Communicate with teacher via notes, phone, email
- \_\_\_ Meet regularly with teacher
- \_\_\_ Attend class and school functions
- \_\_\_ Advocate for child's needs with teacher / principal
- \_\_\_ Volunteer in child's class/school
- \_\_\_ Assist during field trips/ special projects
- \_\_\_ Act as resource person in class
- \_\_\_ Aid in designing/ teaching lessons
- \_\_\_ Participate on school board and/or other school decision-making bodies
- \_\_\_ Actively participate in the PTA
- \_\_\_ Participate in workshops (related to parenting skills/ school curriculum, new teaching and learning practices)
- \_\_\_ Any other

2b. What are the most effective ways that you have found to involve parents in the education of their children? And how frequently do you use the different ways (Please check mark under the appropriate column)?

Effective ways of involving parents:                      Very often              Often              Sometimes              Rarely

(list your items)

3. What are the reasons you believe that some parents are *not involved* in their children's education? Please rank the following with 1 being *most important*. You may also add any other components.

- \_\_\_ Difficulty in understanding the school culture/ climate
- \_\_\_ Transportation problems
- \_\_\_ Limited access to information
- \_\_\_ Educational constraints
- \_\_\_ Differences in beliefs about teachers' vs. parents' responsibility in education of the child
- \_\_\_ Difficulty in comprehending language
- \_\_\_ Apathy (Don't care)
- \_\_\_ Struggling to provide family with basic needs
- \_\_\_ Other time commitments (work, volunteer, caring for family members)
- \_\_\_ Any other

4. What specific challenges have you found in your attempt to involve parents?

## Section II

1. How would you define culture?

2a. According to you, what are the *most important things that you need to know to understand culture*? From the *complete* list, please rank from 1-5, with 1 being *most important*. You may also add any other components.

- \_\_\_ Ways of communicating (body language, personal space, comfort with touching, talking, listening)
- \_\_\_ Social values (definition of success, achievement, determinants of status, do's & don'ts of behavior)
- \_\_\_ Ways of learning and knowledge most valued (preferred way of learning, skills and knowledge most valued)
- \_\_\_ Ideas regarding raising children (child rearing patterns, goals, family structure, adult-child interactions, discipline, locus of control)
- \_\_\_ Religious values
- \_\_\_ Outward displays of culture (celebrations, artifacts, food, dress, art, literature, music)
- \_\_\_ Any other (please specify)

3. Do you think it is important to understand the different cultures of the families of the children in your classrooms? Why or why not?

(continued on next page)

4. How would you rate *your awareness* of the following with respect to the diverse children/ families in your classroom?

Very aware      Aware      Somewhat aware      Not at all aware      Not applicable

Ways of communicating  
Social values  
Ways of learning &  
knowledge most valued  
Ideas regarding raising  
children  
Religious values  
Outward displays of culture  
Any other

5. On which of the following areas have you *sought information from parents*? Check all that apply.

\_\_\_ Ways of communicating (body language, personal space, comfort with touching, talking, listening)  
\_\_\_ Social values (definition of success, achievement, determinants of status, do's & don'ts of behavior)  
\_\_\_ Ways of learning and knowledge most valued (preferred way of learning, skills and knowledge most valued)  
\_\_\_ Ideas regarding raising children (child rearing patterns, goals, family structure, adult-child interactions, discipline, locus of control)  
\_\_\_ Religious values  
\_\_\_ Outward displays of culture (celebrations, artifacts, food, dress, art, literature, music)  
\_\_\_ Any other (please specify)

6. Which of the following components of culture do you think *most influence a child's academic learning/performance*?

Most influential      Influential      Somewhat influential      Not at all influential

Ways of communicating  
Social values  
Ways of learning & knowledge  
most valued  
Ideas regarding raising children  
Religious values  
Outward displays of culture  
Any other

7a. What are the different ways in which you acknowledge/ address the diverse backgrounds/cultures of the families *in your curriculum*?

7b. What are the different ways in which you acknowledge the different backgrounds/ cultures of the families *in your interactions* with them?

## Section III: Demographics

*Personal Information:* Please provide the following information as it applies to you:

Gender: \_\_\_ Male \_\_\_ Female  
Ethnicity/ Nationality:  
Race:  
Religion:  
Position Currently held: \_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_ Specialist \_\_\_ Administrator \_\_\_ Other  
If teacher, grade currently teaching: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of years of teaching experience: \_\_\_\_\_  
Type of school: \_\_\_ Urban \_\_\_ Rural \_\_\_ Suburban

*Information about the classroom*

Culture/ Race/ Ethnicity represented (%)  
African-American \_\_\_\_\_ Native American \_\_\_\_\_  
Alaskan/Pacific Island \_\_\_\_\_ Asian \_\_\_\_\_  
Caucasian/European \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic/ Latino \_\_\_\_\_  
Middle Eastern \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Religion (%)  
Buddhist \_\_\_\_\_ Jewish \_\_\_\_\_  
Christian \_\_\_\_\_ Muslim \_\_\_\_\_  
Hindu \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Languages Spoken (%)  
Arabic \_\_\_\_\_ Polish \_\_\_\_\_  
Chinese \_\_\_\_\_ Russian \_\_\_\_\_  
English \_\_\_\_\_ Spanish \_\_\_\_\_  
French \_\_\_\_\_ Swahili \_\_\_\_\_  
Gujarati \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
Hindi \_\_\_\_\_